# TIRED AND WEARY

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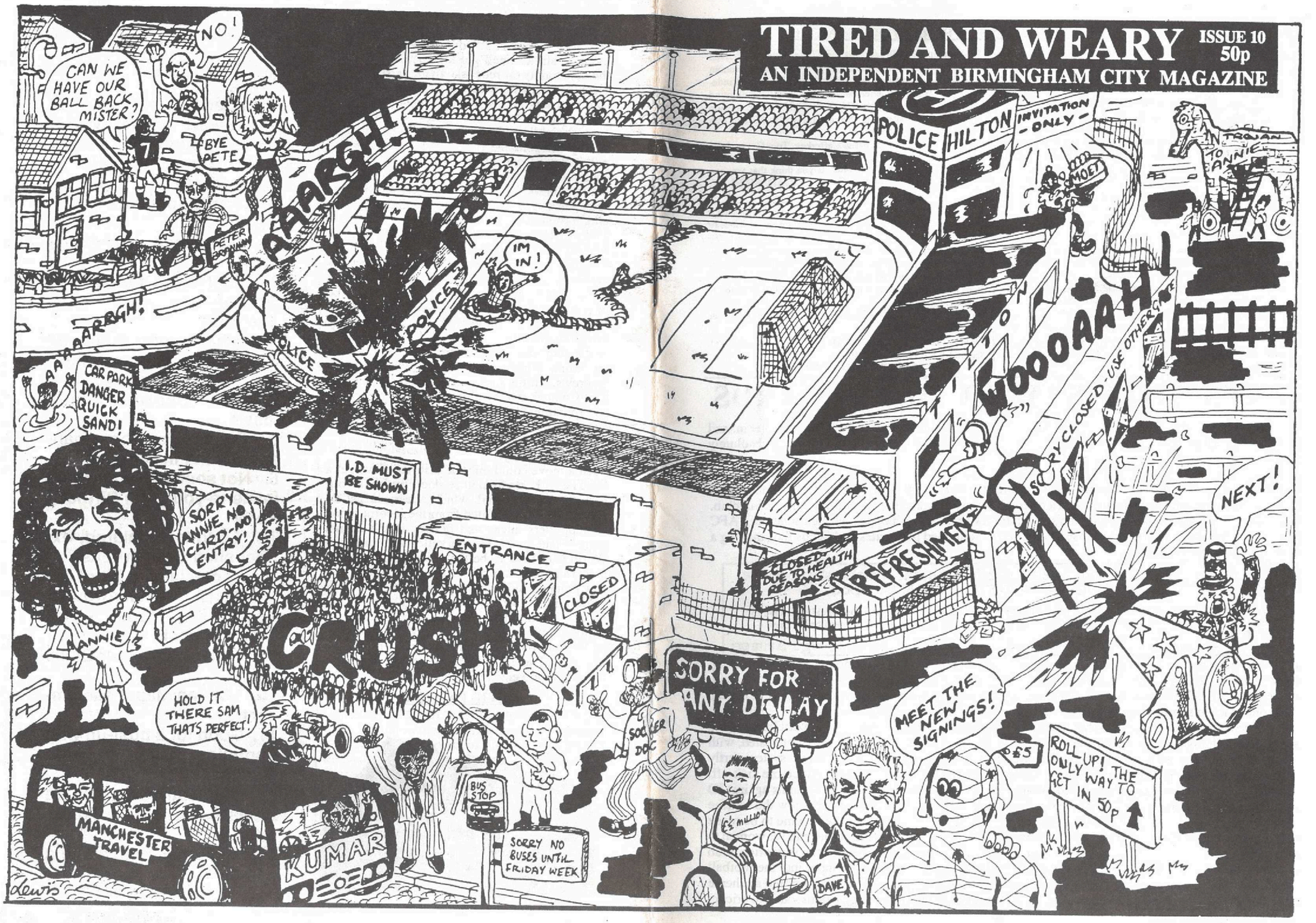
AN INDEPENDENT BIRMINGHAM CITY MAGAZINE



## THE TRUTH AND WHERE YOU COME IN

Tired and Weary is a labour of love for Steve Beauchampé, Jim Bryant, Matthew Cole, Hugh O'Sullivan and Dave Parker. For Sam's benefit (and anyone else he may have misled) none of us earn 40K per annum from the magazine or drive Evans Halshaw sponsored cars. However, we continue to offer fans an independent voice. So take advantage of this and WRITE IN with your letters and articles. With this in mind thanks to Paul Baker, Sally Cooper (Design and Typesetting) Mark Lewis (Cartoonist) and Steve Robinson without whom this publication would probably have come out later still. So, even if you're Mr and Mrs Boon from Oldham (see the Exeter programme) we'd like your contributions.

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We still have copies of 'Birmingham City - A Complete Record' for sale at £14.95 including p&p.

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# FANS STILL SAY NO TO I.D. CARDS

Got your ID card yet? Mine was sent straight away - it's great. I'm sure the hoodlums won't get in; and what an atmosphere down at St Andrews nowadays. Benefits of the membership scheme - absolutely super, too many to mention.

### - OR PERHAPS NOT

Less than six months after the Government were forced to abandon their ID card Bill, Blues rehash the idea with all the inefficiency and user-unfriendliness that we've come to expect from our football club. Amazing isn't it? One look at last season's programmes finds Samesh opposing such schemes. AFC Bournemouth rejected theirs in the close season due to continued poor gates and Leeds fans making a mockery of the system.

> The Government must acknowledge the fact that the Membership Scheme was rendered defunct, in light of the disturbances at Blackpool.
>
> In essence, the Government's ID-Card system had a negligible effect on detering hooligans, and would only serve to : stop the 'casual' supporters attending matches. How many more instances do the Government need before they accept this?
>
> -Samesh Kumar 11/11 & 14/10/89 programmes

Following repeated crowd trouble, Blues were certainly under threat from the FA to do something. However, like the Government when confronted with the problem, their solution is crazy. Blues claim the scheme will help prevent trouble. Rubbish. By multiple applications, borrowing a card, using the same one twice or simply sitting down anyone can get in. This isn't finding loopholes - it's pointing out that a scheme designed to keep out hooligans is ill-conceived and unworkable. Such criticism would apply even if the system was administered properly. But it isn't. Most gatemen aren't interested, with season ticket holders rarely asked to show their cards. Against Bury a fault meant that the system partly went down, while versus Southend large queues led to the scheme's abandonment just before kick-off. Shortly after its announcement, Tired and Weary met with Anne Bassett. Our arguements against ID cards were brushed aside, but the Chief Executive expressed interest in our views on how the scheme could be improved. As requested, we submitted written proposals calling for the scheme to be made voluntary or, failing that, that there be exemptions for OAPs and children (our earlier call for women to be exempt had also fallen on deaf ears). Other ideas included the replacement of the supporters club with a members club and the possibility of an elected fans' representative with input into the football club's decision-making process. Along with price reductions and special offers we proposed a scheme with so many benefits that supporters would feel compelled to join. These suggestions - akin to cricket

club membership - received scant consideration and were rejected as impractical. To his credit, Samesh has since met us to explain his reasons for introducing the scheme and hear our views, but at the time of writing, things remain unchanged.

Meanwhile the West Midlands branch of the FSA has voiced concern over the rate at which supporters are passing through the turnstiles, highlighting the added transaction of handing over a card for the gateman to slide through a computerized reader. In consultation with Tired and Weary, the FSA unsuccessfully lobbied the Council's Public Safety at Sports Stadia Committee to have St Andrews' safety certificate withdrawn. Since then it has regularly monitored crowd flow, repeatedly recording averages of around 6 per minute, way below Lord Justice Taylor's recommendation of 11-12.

Blues claim that the system is safe but when/where/how have they tested and monitored it? No evidence has been produced to allay fears over safety at St Andrews. As the overcrowding in the Railway End Paddock v Bury showed, the scheme has enough difficulty dealing with gates of under 8,000. The Southend game confirmed that it couldn't cope when a mere 5,000 use the terraces. So what happens when we get a big fixture at short notice, such as a cup replay against Liverpool, Villa etc? How will the club handle the rush of applications and ensure safe and speedy entrance through the turnstiles? Samesh told Tired and Weary that "we'll have to cope" but no contingency plans appear to exist. Making the match all-ticket with cards shown when tickets are bought would hardly be a foolproof method. Blues are not Reading and our potential support is far greater. The scheme must be capable of passing the severest test before it can be deemed safe. In reality, it will probably be postponed for big matches as happened at Reading when they played Newcastle and Sunderland in the FA Cup.

The team's record-breaking start was met by near record low home attendances. 10,447 turned up against Crewe last season - a meagre 5,847 watched the first home league match this term. The top of the table fixtures against Southend and Grimsby should have attracted much higher gates. At present, the atmosphere at St Andrews is minimal but what happens if there's a sustained run of defeats? The club has tried to force people to buy cards by raising seat prices, so that anyone making a snap decision to see Blues v Chester, Wigan or any other Third Division also-ran must now pay £7.50. That's 50p MORE than they would to see Liverpool, Spurs etc. just three miles away. It's blatantly obvious that casual supporters are being deterred from visiting St Andrews. They are treated with contempt, labelled as not real fans or disloyal, while Ms Bassett views legitimate critics with suspicion.

Blues' claims that most supporters back the ID scheme simply don't hold. Just because someone gets a card doesn't mean that they agree with the concept. People dislike the poll tax but most pay it. If not getting a card means either finding £7.50 to watch Third Division football or not going most people will get a card. But there haven't been many letters or 'phone calls in the media expounding the scheme's virtues. However, there has been plenty of public opposition, including chants at matches telling Ms Bassett what to do with her ID cards. Still, barracking the Chief Executive beats watching little kids take penalties or any other form of half-time entertainment - can't we have a conductor on a podium in the centre of the pitch like at the Cup Final when they sing 'Abide With Me?'

Now the box/shareholders are calling for an EGM. Despite the programme's intense propaganda it appears that Blues fans still say NO to ID cards.

Even if anyone agrees with the principle, its execution has been a shambles. Fans weren't consulted - orders were simply dictated from on high. Some supporters have received several cards, others experienced considerable delay and difficulties in obtaining one. Confusion created by the club's near silence over when the scheme would become fully operational was exacerbated by the embarrassing hold-up in the distribution of cards. When they do arrive the cards bear no name or photograph (but as their purpose is to identify whether or not you are an approved fan then they ARE ID cards).

Meanwhile, uncertainty over which turnstile to use (if you can find one open) and what area of the ground you are allowed in has been common. Both operating the scheme and the problems that it throws up is taking many hours of club employ-

ees' time, which is costing Blues a lot of money. Yet, four months after it was announced, fans are still waiting to reap any benefits from their membership - they haven't even been sent any junk mail!
Of course that's what it's all about really. Compiling that magic list of 15-20,000 names to sell to Virgin/Peugeot/Readers Digest. As Samesh reminded us in the Grimsby programme: "clubs still do not appreciate the financial value of a new supporter. It is precisely for this reason that this club is trying to develop its Membership scheme."
However, irrespective of whether we sympathise with the sentiments, people should be enrolled voluntarily by distributing application forms via the programme, turnstiles, Supporters Club, at away games and through the local media. This way commercial backers would have more chance of getting an enthusiastic customer database rather than the resentful one that they currently stand to receive.
If crowds remain below our reported break-even figure of 10,000 and the club continues to lose money, something will have to give. It's difficult to see Kumar or Bassett backing down voluntarily - more likely another player will be sold. Birmingham City just can't afford to deter neutral fans and casual supporters as well as loyal regulars. Surely there's a better way to make St Andrews a safer and more commercially successful place, encouraging more families and sponsors. At present the ground is only safer in that fewer people are inside it. Then again, what would we know, supporting the club week in week out, putting up with potential hazards and irresponsible management? How can we question the scheme's merits, being, according to the programme "not qualified to comment"?
The FSA were right to label the scheme "an expensive white elephant". To channel your grievances, write to Councillor Frank McLoughlin, Chairman of the Public Safety at Sports Stadia Committee at the Council House, Birmingham, as well as to the club. This committee has the power of veto over Blues. Although Bassett's baby has not been aborted, it can still be killed off in its infancy.

**Hugh O'Sullivan and Steve Beauchampé**

As a Blues fan of some years I recently had cause to gain entrance to Annie Bassett's office - easier than gaining entrance to the ground these days. The reasons for me doing this were twofold. Firstly, I took issue with Bassett as to why concessions for the unemployed (of which I am currently one) on production of a UB40 card had been stopped. Secondly, I expressed my opposition to the new membership scheme. Predictably, the response was a lot of waffle about the club being a business which needed to make money. I didn't expect to solve much via this method, but it's clear that quite a lot of opposition to the card scheme exists among supporters. Indeed, I think that there is enough anger and resentment among a lot of Blues fans to 'turn the management over' on this one. **G SMITH, NORTHFIELD**

**Tired & Weary, 133 Longmore Road, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands**

There can be no doubt that the membership scheme is the thing most in supporters' minds. Like many, I don't favour the scheme, but I fear for the situation at the moment. The scenes in the Railway End at the Bury game were akin to that of a lynch mob. It concerns me that this behaviour will tarnish the reputation of all supporters, thus reinforcing the view of the scheme's architects that it is morally sound.
It's a shame that such a start to the season has been overshadowed, but I feel certain that sense will prevail. TOM PUNSHON, MILTON KEYNES

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# GOODMAN AND BAD MEN

Norman Gidney is an important man. The head of Warwick Industries, Gidney is a powerful and successful entrepreneur. However, where Blues are concerned, he is of little consequence. But if his performance at club Annual General Meetings are anything to go by, he sees himself as a very big cheese indeed.
Norman Gidney is the man who, after a very public row with Ken Wheldon, cancelled his executive box at St Andrews - and promptly took his custom to Villa Park. At last year's AGM, Gidney burst in late, noisily disrupting proceedings, and, spoiling for an argument, spent large parts of the meeting complaining about the choice of Manchester as venue. Just once would have been enough Norm!
As far back as 1978 Norman Gidney appears to have been trying to buy control of Blues. Almost every time that there's speculation of a change of ownership at St Andrews his name is mentioned. However, as his transfer to

Villa Park shows, Gidney is a box holder first and a City fan second and the thought of him owning our football club should set the alarm bells ringing for all supporters. Thus despite ready access to the media, I can't recall him uttering a word publicly about ID cards, the great training ground mystery, facilities for supporters or pretty much anything that affects the magic of our matchday experience. Likewise, he's been equally silent in his praise for the significant steps the club have taken to improve their community image. Quite simply, the man's all takeover talk.

Like Gidney, Clive Wilkinson, former Labour Leader of Birmingham City Council, has been quick to criticise and slow to praise events at St Andrews. Few would argue with his disapproval of the Wheldon regime and his concern at the sale of Elmdon. His instant criticism of the Kumar Brothers as being from Manchester rather than Birmingham was unwarranted, appearing as simply sniping to get his name in the papers. (After all, how many of our players are from Birmingham? - Wilkinson doesn't complain about that). Indeed, the media have built him into a sort of people's champion, but he's nothing of the sort. For, while Clive Wilkinson makes his terrace credentials very public, he never fought in the ID card wars and never attends FSA meetings. Happy to make impressive sounding speeches when there's a reporter around, while staying tight-lipped at other crucial moments, Wilkinson is big on words, short on action. True, he's recently called for an EGM, but where was he in the previous four months and why is he only now kicking up a fuss? Could it be as a destabilising move because there's a consortium waiting in the wings that Clive likes the sound of? If he really cares for the club, then campaigning for changes in harness with and under the banner of other fans should be his method. Goodness knows, the opportunities are there.

Compare these two with Linda Goodman, 36 year old Chair of the Supporters Club. Organiser of raffles, dances, lotteries, coach trips - if there was a contest to find Birmingham City's most loyal supporter, it's doubtful that anyone could hold a candle to Lyn. A Blues fan for 23 ye ars, Goodman first became actively involved with the Supporters Club in 1982. Her devotion to Blues means that she works long hours each week to ensure that the Supporters Club keeps functioning. Away from match days, her only significant assistance comes from lifelong fan Paula Hanrahan and frankly, without Lyn, it's unlikely that there'd be a supporters club. Ian Clarkson's kit sponsor, Goodman works closely with our Norwegian Supporters Club, has produced a brief information pack on Birmingham City and also answers any overseas mail that Blues receive (she's recently been helping a group of fans who want to set up a supporters club in Nova Scotia). Lyn pays most of the the administration expenses that she incurs herself, declining club offers to refund the money. Last season her work helped the Supporters Club generate a £7,500 profit for the football club, but despite this she refuses to even accept complimentary tickets to away games and pays her own fare for the coach trips that she puts so much work into organising and stewarding.

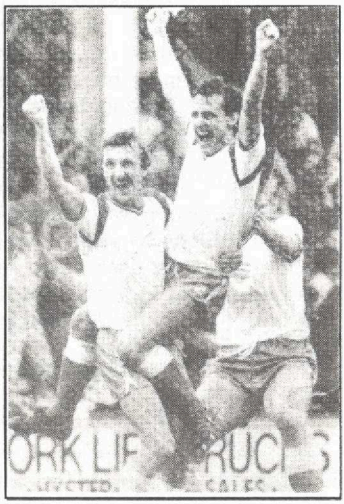
Recently, Blues have asked Lyn Goodman to sit on the Council's Public Safety at Sports Stadia Committee. No doubt she'll do it but if the club's loud commitment to the importance of fans is genuine, then they must put much greater resources into the areas of work currently done voluntarily by Lyn Goodman. Their decision to take over the running of the Supporters Club brought with it a responsibility to ensure its proper organisation and funding. Clearly, to operate an effective supporters club, Lyn Goodman needs help. Perhaps as keen fans Norman Gidney and Clive Wilkinson might offer their assistance. At the moment they are all mouth and no trousers while Lyn Goodman is all action and a pair of brown cords.

JIM BRYANT.

## *Ian Handysides*

*Ian's death was very sad. He was an honest, talented footballer and it's a tragedy that he died so young. Everyone will have their favourite memory of him - scoring at Villa Park or setting up the relegation-saving goal at Coventry amongst others. It's a measure of supporters respect that so many turned up at his testimonial match and that his name has been chanted by Blues fans at games this season. Birmingham City will always need players like Ian Handysides.*

**HUGH O'SULLIVAN**



# TEAM VIEWS

Here we go, here we go,here we go-again! The same old story unfolds before us - once Blues show signs of getting a few decent players together they start selling them. In return, a hotchpotch bunch of bargain basement mediocrity is left or brought in to fill the gaps. The board's broken promise to keep young talent may help bump up the asking price but the Kevin Ashley sale money will probably do little more than help eradicate the club's increasing debts while his leaving undoubtedly hit supporters' optimism after the team's excellent start. In the long term Blues will miss Ashley's quality though £500,000 wasn't a bad price for him. Presumably however it was always the intention to sell one of our best players, otherwise how could we have financed the purchase of Phil Gridelet - certainly not from the cash raised and saved from releasing the likes of Colin Gordon and Kevin Langley.

It now seems that the bulk of the Ashley money won't be made available to Dave Mackay. Blues are reputed to be £750,OOO in debt - if that's why Ashley was sold then Samesh should be honest and say so. The Kumars have repeatedly said that they intend making Blues a First Division club again. Like it or not, that's going to cost money and the Brothers must either invest their own or bring in someone who will. With the money Ms Bassett is costing the club, through her salary, overheads and the ID card losses, we could have bought a decent player. As it is, fans are asking who will be next to go? Sturridge? Gleghorn? Bailey?

What must Fred Davies feel seeing one of his protégés sold? It was sad to see Davies vacate the position of Youth Team Coach, but pleasing that he was appointed to the much needed post of Reserve Team Coach - another mistake of the Wheldon era righted. We wish Brian Caswell all the best as Davies' successor - he has a hard act to follow. Samesh has promised to invest some of the Ashley money strengthening our scouting system. This will be a wise investment, but it shouldn't amount to more than a few thousand pounds and should be used as well as, rather than instead of, making new signings.

The current first team squad roughly resembles last season's. It needed to be built on and developed following 1989-90's seventh place finish, but apart from the acquisition of Greg Downs (who's playing well) no one was brought in during the close season. Mackay was unlucky with Eamon Dolan (who we may well yet end up signing) and Phil Gridelet, but these messy summer non-transfer dealing sagas were both disappointing and embarrassing for the club. Clearly though Blues were right not to press on with the signings - perhaps they've learned from the Phil Sproson cock-up. However, when targets such as Russell Wilcox and Gridelet choose Hull and Barnsley in preference to Blues one wonders if the club give the impression of lacking ambition.

So what areas of the team need strengthening? Question marks exist over the backbone of the side i.e. centre back/central midfield/centre forward. The middle of the defence, despite Vince Overson's organisational abilities and aerial domination, is susceptible to pace. Overson's place in the team represents a climbdown by the manager. Whatever happened to the edict that players must live within one hour's travel of the club? Will Overson, Trevor Aylott and others continue to shirk their responsibilities and miss full training? And when does Mackay himself intend moving nearer to Birmingham - there's no shortage of houses

near the ground for him to choose from.

Ian Atkins' departure if anything exacerbated the midfield's imbalance, but at least means that we no longer play five at the back. A strong, hard anchor man is needed in midfield to harness and support the youthful promise of Dean Peer and John Frain and the skill and guile of Nigel Gleghorn. Third Division midfields are creaking with artisans, and artists such as Gleghorn are a precious commodity. In such an environment a lot is being asked of Paul Tait, but perhaps it will be the making of him.

Up front things aren't settled with several combinations tried. Dennis Bailey and Simon Sturridge are our best two goalscorers but as a partnership they don't quite cut it. What's required is an out and out striker (we hear that Wayne Clarke hasn't lost his touch) whose task is to wreak havoc in the penalty area and complement the approach play and attacking skills of Bailey and Sturridge. At least then Simon could be played wide in a sort of John Barnes role where his dribbling and crossing skills can be used to best effect.

Trevor Aylott has finally arrived, hyped by Samesh as "perhaps the best hold-up player in the Football League" (maybe he can rob a few banks and help clear our debts). It's probably a bit early to judge him but we have to ask, was it worth the wait? Despite having weeks to think about it, the manager hasn't worked out who's going to play alongside Aylott, with Bailey and Sturridge swapping places.

What's the betting that we won't eventually see these two in the starting line up, with the ex-Bournemouth man on the bench? Ritchie Moran won't solve anything though. Mackay was right to give him a trial and, following his goalscoring in the reserves, a run out in the first team - after all, he could have saved us a lot of money. But for goodness sake, it's obvious that he hasn't got it. Yet the club offers him a one year contract! We haven't the money to throw around on another reserve team player's wages.

After 18 months as boss the manager still doesn't seem sure of his first choice eleven. Our over-large playing staff contains too many squad members. Some of the deadwood can't or won't play due to injuries or rifts with the club. But still they remain, adding to our bloated wage bill. Ken's scrapyard may have gone but under Dave Mackay, St Andrews seems to be becoming the final resting place for the rotting hulks of lower division football. Mackay's style of management is questionable. At times myopic and inflexible (particularly over his use of substitutes). His record in the transfer market is very hit and miss while his public pronouncements only heighten doubts about his ability to judge players.

To Mackay's credit, the team does produce attractive football and can outplay any team in this below-par division. The grit and determination displayed at Stoke shows great promise which needs nurturing, not dismantling, though it's to be hoped that the Gay Meadow outrage was a one-off.

And what of Samesh? It's fine having an interested, knowledgeable chairman but another having one interfering on the playing side and encroaching on the manager's decisions. If Samesh wants to be manager then O.K. let him apply for the job. Despite being on the fringe of a promotion place, with what is still a young and inexperienced side, unless strengthened, we'll do very well to go up outright. Yet promotion is vital this season. The contracts of 18 players and staff are up for renewal next spring/summer and our best players may not tolerate another trip to Crewe, Wigan, Shrewsbury etc. If we don't start next season in Division Two then further names will be added to the seemingly never-ending list of good and great players who have left St. Andrews, supposedly for the benefit of the club.

**HUGH O'SULLIVAN**

## PITCHED BATTLE

Thanks to a grant from the Football Trust and backing from Marathon Sports, Upper Green, Tettenhall and the Blues fans at Chapter 22 Management of Warwick, Tired and Weary FC will continue to show Birmingham City supporters in a good light through its friendly matches against other fans. No thanks to Birmingham City Council however. They could only offer us pitches in Rednal and Sutton Coldfield. The 'European City of Sport for All', despite pouring hundreds of thousands into the Super Prix was prepared to leave Blues supporters in the ridiculous situation of having to play our guests from other clubs five miles north of Villa Park. Pathetic really.

To be fair, the Council are laying some grass pitches in the redeveloped Kingston Park. Let's hope St Andrews doesn't have to make way for the rest of the Heartlands scheme.

(If anybody knows of a more suitable school or works venue we could use on Saturday mornings please get in touch via the Tired and Weary address. Also anyone interested in playing?... or helping us out in getting to our early morning away matches?)

## LONDON SUPPORTERS CLUB

Live in the home counties? Support Blues? Then you've just got to join Blues' London Supporters Club. There's the chance of being 'discovered' by a Tired and Weary football team scout for goodness sake. You'll also receive regular newsletters, help with travel and a rare opportunity to feel at complete ease in London wearing your Blues top, at their renowned 'socials'. Remember they love you because you're one of their own: there's no Nigel Kennedy in Blues' London Supporters Club. Just £4.50 (no ID card or doctors note needed) sent to Geoff Perry at 15 Fordwells Drive, Warren Park, Bracknell, Berkshire will change your life and spiritual pathway forever, probably.

# Blue Revolution!

*Twelve months after the dramatic events in Eastern Europe that ripped down the Iron Curtain, it's easy to forget that in 1978 another dictatorial leadership was threatened by a popular uprising. But then it was the Blues, not the Reds, that were under attack, and the protestors wanted the end, not of Communism, but Coombunism. Steve Beauchampé reports.*

By today's standards everything in the garden seemed rosy. Blues in the First Division, average gates around 24,000 (29,000 turned up to see the cup-tie against then non-League Wigan - imagine that against Cheltenham) and players such as Trevor Francis, Kevin Dillon and Joe Gallagher in the side. But in 1978 Blues fans had aspirations more in keeping with those of a club bearing the name of Britain's foremost provincial city. And things were most definitely not well. The mouthwatering promise of the early 70's, when 36,000 was commonplace and the prospect of winning trophies was not a pipedream had evaporated and the team really did seem to be making up the numbers in Division One.

Season 1977-78 had opened with five straight defeats and the sacking of manager Willie Bell. Sir Alf Ramsey, a Director since January '76 replaced him, initially on a temporary basis, though he was later referred to as 'Consultant'. But by February, with the team hovering just above the relegation zone and out of both cups, the season was fast fizzling out. Despite Blues winning at Liverpool for the first time in 43 years and completing the double over Aston Villa, the fans had had enough. O.K. they'd had enough on many occasions before, but this time they were serious. Undoubtedly a few simply shook their heads, said never again and walked out on the club for ever. But for the rest, suddenly and quite unexpectedly, there was an alternative.

Steve Robinson had been a Blues fan all his life. He'd watched helpless the club's steady decline during the 70's and felt that, rather than resorting to the usual scapegoat of replacing the manager the buck should stop at the door of Keith Coombs, hereditary Chairman living in the shadow of his respected late father Clifford. **"Keith Coombs had his heart in the right place" recalls Robinson "but he was not a man of great vision.... that was also true of other board members (who included Keith's brother Derek), it needed substantial changes at the top".** So, in one of those moments that comes to some people and no matter how hard they try to resist it they can't, Robinson decided to act. Along with a few friends he formed the Blues Action Group, booked a room at the old Digbeth Civic Hall and notified the press. Over 200 fans filled the room. Soulmates to Robinson's fast fading dream of a blue heaven, they were angry and frustrated, the spectre of over 100 years of failure driving them to vent their feelings.

It was agreed to form a committee and stage a bigger public meeting a week or so later. The Evening Mail dubbed it 'The Blue Revolution' and Robinson, director of a Birmingham employment agency,

# REVOLUTION!

was thrust into the spotlight, portrayed, with all the media's talent for pigeonholing as a terrace hero. On the field, a 4-0 defeat at Coventry City was the last straw. It was a toothless performance, as bad as any the team had produced in years. Sir Alf, who only travelled to the club from his Suffolk home a couple of days a week, stepped down, his heart clearly not in the job.

The day before the second public meeting, the board attempted to cut the ground from under the rebels by appointing Jim Smith, Oxford United's highly rated boss, as manager and Dennis Shaw, the Mail's chief soccer writer, as commercial supremo. But it seemed too little, too late. The following day (March 14th), Birmingham Town Hall was packed to the rafters, with hundreds more locked outside. Speaking from a platform decorated with the now adopted slogan 'The Blue Revolution' and the simple message 'The Board Must Go', Robinson told the meeting that, following approaches from businessmen, the movement could already raise a million pounds to launch a bid to buy Coombs' 80,000 shares. Speaker after speaker lambasted the board and when ex-Blues favourite Roy Warhurst held up his Second Division Championship medal and told the crowd: "This is the only prize we have won with any regularity. That explains why you are here tonight", like Robinson earlier, he received a deafening ovation.

The movement had spread like a bushfire and, as Steve Robinson said: **"We were all just swept up and carried along by it"**. The rebels proposed that at the following Tuesday's home game with title - chasing Arsenal, supporters should stage a walk-out 15 minutes from time. "We want to get 40,000 people there. We want to show that we are for the club and then walk-out to prove that we are against the board." The meeting overwhelmingly endorsed the call. "I was a little doubtful about the walk-out." Robinson told me, **"I think it was the wrong tactic, Blues fans didn't want to be seen harming the club."**

Cometh the hour, those doubts were confirmed. As banners were raised to signal the walk-out, everyone appeared to be looking at each other seemingly waiting for someone else to make the first move. In the end only a couple of thousand of the 22,087 crowd left and it was difficult to tell how many of these were going early to avoid the crowds. It was a body blow for the rebels. But Blues fans have often seemed pacified by thinking they've seen a chink of light at the end of a tunnel. The appointment of Smith and Shaw, and a three-game unbeaten run, had maybe persuaded a few that the crisis was past, that the revels had shaken the board into action and that would suffice.

The fans' meetings and walk-out had been designed as very public expressions of dissent but the action group's liaisons with those who might be willing to inject money into the club had been of a very private nature. The Evening Mail dubbed these men the 'shadow board' and bandied around names such as Norman Gidney and Bob Evans, now Warwickshire County Cricket Club Chairman, whose consortium had tried unsuccessfully to purchase a major shareholding the previous year. **"There never was a shadow board as such"** says Robinson, **"just a number of businessmen, not necessarily all connected."** Robinson has always refused to name the mystery bidders and even now, more than 12 years on, he won't divulge their identity though, he concedes, **"some of the names wouldn't be much of a surprise"**, adding **"they had very exciting ideas."** But weren't they just proposing to change one autocratic power structure for another? Robinson was aware of this but one of the Blue Revolution's main demands was for a pubilic share issue and the would-be buyers were committed to this.

Eventually, on March 24th, Robinson announced that an offer of £250,000 was being made to Keith Coombs for his 80,000 shares, which the rebels reckoned had a face value of only £40,000 Robinson himself was not a bidder, but through the action group was merely representing a consortium of five businessmen prepared to take over the club. However, the failure of the walk-out had bolstered Keith Coombs's resolve to ride out the storm and he rejected the offer. **"After that things wound down. As long as Keith Coombs refused to sell there was nothing that we could do about it.... I think that he was devastated by the criticism and took the whole thing very personally although I always tried to keep it from being seen as simply a battle between the two of us. His father had run the club for years and he probably saw it as an attack on the family name."** Seemingly his pride was more important than the money.

Whatever will the great mass of supporters had had to fight was well and truly buried by a run of 7 wins in 9 games that saw the club ease comfortably away from the relegation zone. The Blues Action Group carried on for a further twelve months, trying to force a share issue, but the Blue Revolution was dead. At its height the action group had a membership of around 1,000. **"We produced newsletters and split a block of shares to give more fans a say;** (this fully ten years ahead of Tired and Weary's attempt) **we were even contacted for advice by a group of Newcastle supporters dissatisfied with their board."**

On the events of early 1978 Steve Robinson reflects that it was **"a sobering experience. For a brief period it was very powerful and captured the mood at St Andrews, but it didn't achieve anything".**

Here I would disagree. While it

may not have succeeded in ousting the board, the Blue Revolution shamed the directors into action. Without that pressure, the club may well have continued to drift like a rudderless ship and the team's late season purple patch under Jim Smith might never have happened. Quite simply, the Blue Revolution was the catalyst for the club surviving relegation.

Keith Coombs remained Chairman until 1985 when, with Birmingham City in grave financial difficulties, he gave his shares to Ken Wheldon for nothing, Wheldon taking on the club's debts in return. Just eight years after Keith Coombs rejected the Blue Revolution's takeover bid £250,000 must have seemed an awfully high price to have paid for his pride.

Steve Robinson meanwhile hasn't been to Blues for 3 or 4 years, though he's often asked about his moment of fame. Now General Manager of the Alexandra Theatre and therefore a man who should know something about public relations,he describes the ownership structure of football clubs as **"archaic - 20 years behind the times"** and feels that clubs have ignored their local community. Of Birmingham City he says: **"While they're always the first result that I look for, I think that their problems are so entrenched."** Steve Robinson and the Blue Revolution came along in the days before the FSA, fanzines and independent action groups provided a support network for disgruntled fans. Perhaps if that kind of back-up had been available, they might have achieved more. It's interesting to look at the make up of the First Division in 1977-78. 21 of its 22 clubs are still playing in the top two divisions. In January, the D'oyly Carte Opera moves base to Steve Robinson's theatre to perform its Gilbert and Sullivan comedies. The events of the last 12 years indicate that they may not be the funniest show in town.

## SOCCER DOCTOR

***A Soccer Doctor writes.***

As a soccer doctor I am often asked what causes the disease Anniebassettosis. It results from a combination of factors - depression that no one cares for your views; high blood pressure caused by frustration at not getting straight answers; annoyance and tiredness at having to stand in queues for long periods; nausea and sickness from being patronised one moment and insulted the next and temporary blindness resulting from a sudden smile brought on by an unexpected photo opportunity. Symptoms include the desire to hurl abuse at directors boxes, rip up plastic cards and, in its most extreme form, 'phone a man called George Gavin and lose your temper while thousands listen.

An epidemic of Anniebassettosis was reported in Berkshire in the late eighties but now seems to have been eradicated. There appear to be no long-term side effects after the illness has worn off but one danger qualified professional medics have pointed to is that should 10-20,000 sufferers converge at the ground where Anniebassettosis is most prevalent all at once it just might result in crushing and related injuries. Time is probably the best known cure for Anniebassettosis. Eventually the virus finds a more financially lucrative home elsewhere. Scientists believe the illness to be closely related to Moyhnapox, a plague which once threatened millions and was only recently killed off.

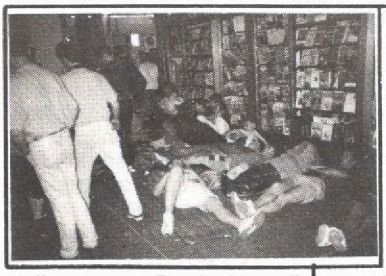
**The Soccer Doctor.**

## Sensoco Unico

Olé Olé Olé

It's one-thirty in the morning, we're in Naples and there's a traffic jam waiting to go the wrong way down a one-way street! The World Cup - the pinnacle of our game and one of life's truly great experiences. And for those of us running the Football Embassy, the FSA's unique supporter advice and assistance service, the tournament took on an extra dimension.

The months of planning, our concerns when the Sardinian authorities offered us no help, the worries over funding the operation, our trepidation as to how fans would react to us (indeed, would any even visit us) - all evaporated in what was a highly successful venture for the FSA. From the moment we opened our Cagliari office at 11.00 a.m. on Thursday June 7th it was almost non-stop activity. The first two fans in (though people had apparently been turning up as early as Monday) swiftly followed by two journalists, set the pattern. In all, around, 2,000 fans used our services in Italy, while we gave about 300 press interviews to reporters from many parts of Western Europe, the Middle East, North and South Africa and Australia. In addition, we held four press conferences- two in Italian. Our office was visited by FA officials, representatives from the Football Trust, the National Football Intelligence Unit, Colin Moynihan's chief



civil servant, Denis Howell, Consular officials and interested locals. Have no doubt, the Football Embassy - particularly in Sardinia - was THE place to find out about off-field matters.

In Cagliari the offices consisted of three rooms (with access to three more at particularly busy times) four telephones, a photocopier, computer, typewriter, fax, TV, video and - most importantly in view of the heat - a fridge. Owned by a press agency, SESS, the office was situated on the edge of the town centre, about 400 metres from Cagliari's Via Roma, a harbour road lined on one side with cafés, bars and restaurants, which proved a great attraction for many England followers.

Cagliari is a port - not a resort - and accommodation was at a premium. Frankly it shouldn't have been a World Cup venue, and internal political wrangling ensured that many of the facilities and attractions associated with such a prestigious event weren't provided.

Naturally it was the fans who suffered ( I guess this is true the world over). Millions of pounds had been spent on alleged VIPs but almost nothing on supporters. The result was that no entertainments were laid on for fans, public transport to outlying areas after around 7.00 p.m. was almost non-existent, the tourist departments weren't interested in the World Cup, the Anglo-Italian Cultural Society likewise and, most importantly, accommodaton was woefully inadequate. That which there was was often booked by journalists sent to report on fans' behaviour. So we had the ridiculous situation of England supporters denied beds because they were filled by those hoping to see them dossing down and living up to a pre-conceived media image.

Travel and accommodation problems were the commonest inquiry we received (followed closely by ticket queries). Hundreds were unable to find a bed around the time of both the Irish and Dutch games, and we wondered what would have happened if England and their opponents had sold their full ticket allocations. We even tried to get a priest to open his church hall after the Holland game but fire regulations defeated us and many fans slept rough on nearby beaches. Some were robbed or attacked.

Others complained of a different type of robbery. Clients and stewards of both official and unofficial tour companies contacted us protesting about their conditions. One of our specialist travel experts investigated these, helping clear up several problems there and then. Some complainants had spent thousands on their holidays and must rightly have felt that all they had to do was to turn up. Plenty of other England supporters seemed to be of a similar disposition. I was amazed how may people just arrived for a week or two's vacation without pre-booking accommodation or match tickets, many of them nearly penniless. I wonder how many more there are still wandering around Europe looking for Italy!

Thos who did make it often had to run a gauntlet of racism. Perhaps this would have happened anyway; as far back as the sixties, Italy/England club matches have been fraught with crowd violence. But undoubtedly, the attitude of our media, police intelligence officers and government ministers contributed to the problem.

For six months Italians had read how they were to be invaded by a marauding army and the hard Sards believed the hype. The number of English headcases rarely got above 100 and was more often around 0. Certainly little of the aggro was particularly orchestrated or pre-planned. The NFIU's claim that English and Dutch thugs had been collaborating was, as we knew, without foundation. But most English fans, though perhaps unadventurous in their thirst to sample Italian culture and being wary of anything foreign, were just ordinary folk abroad trying to enjoy their holidays. Inexperienced travellers and generally more xenophobic than their Euro-counterparts maybe, but a long way from the image that the English and Italian media wanted us to believe and hoped to see.

The English press generally kept strictly to their preconceived stereotypes, taking the line, no aggro, no story - any aggro, front page story. There were notable exceptions, Duncan Campbell of The Guardian and The

Independent's Johnathan Foster, Mark Sandell, Mark Whittaker and Frank Partridge of BBC Radio News for instance. To their credit the Italians, particularly the Sardinian and Bolognese press, went from 'Mama Mia, the hooligans are coming' to 'Where are the hooligans?' But still, if I had a pound for everytime that an Italian called us hooligans.... We generally resisted the temptation to shout back 'Mafiosi' or, in Naples 'car thief'. Some of our hosts actually thought that the English word for supporter was hooligan and one fan recounted how he'd entered a shop to be warmly greeted with the words "Ah, English hooligan."

All this fear and talk of war made the Italian police and security services more prepared to use violence against our supporters. Add to this an incompetence that knocked even that of the West Midlands police into a cocked hat and you had the recipe for.... well, for the pre-Dutch game trouble and Rimini incidents.

Colin Moynihan had returned from his pre-visit to Sardinia happy as a sandboy. "I have in my hand a piece of paper" you could almost hear him say. But his claims to have won Italian agreement to arrest and jail/fine troublemakers were as worthless as Neville Chamberlain's peace in our time with Hitler. The para-military Carabinieri and Polizia fire teargas, baton charge and strike with rifle butts first, then don't ask questions later. They had no graded response to incidents and no interest in separating the guilty few from the innocent masses. Their failure to convict troublemakers did football no favours. Whither Moynihan's criticism?

The worst police excesses on Sardinia came before the Dutch game. Several hundred fans were set upon by the security forces in a revenge attack on anyone English following an earlier stone throwing incident by a different group of fans. Cornered on a petrol station forecourt, the supporters were brutally beaten and some were robbed (cameras, cash, match tickets). Tellingly, Antonio Pitea, the man responsible for policing during the World Cup in Cagliari, was on the spot. Pitea was an animal. That police forces in towns wherever England played used him as an advisor maybe explains why the policing remained so incompetent and vicious throughout.

As for the ex-Sports Minister, he just flew in and out of the country visiting only his hotel and the stadium, largely ignoring the press, most officials and spurning an opportunity to meet us. He behaved more like Howard Hughes than a minister for sport.

Meanwhile, we were overrun dealing with all manner of problems - a fan needing anti-rabies injections, where to get a camera repaired, bus and rail times, broken-down vehicles, where to buy crutches. So if we hadn't been there, then who would have done all this work? The Consul, who, even with reinforced staffing levels were still often overstretched? Maybe the FA? Maybe no one? Whatever doubts the FA had harboured about our role were soon dispelled. Our two organisations have never worked so well together and the ticket office staff, led by Pat Smith, were magnificent, sometimes operating in very trying circumstances. And never were circumstances more trying than in Turin for the semi-final where ticket demand far exceeded supply and feelings ran high. The police and the hired FA stewards had abdicated their responsibilities to control the situation but with an angry throng crowded and crushed around the small ticket office in Parco Ruffini the FSA, helped by a few sympathetic English speaking Carabinieri, managed to organise a safer queuing system and kept supporters informed on how and when tickets would be distributed.

At least here we didn't get the infamous Italian shrug of the shoulders, the national symbol for buck-passing. Italian red tape is thicker than any other that I've encountered. We largely failed in our attempts to lay on entertainment for the fans, though we did play football against (and beat) the Cagliari ultras (those are the ones who shout, sing and generally frighten the horses). But perhaps the biggest frustrations concerned the charity fundraising. A book could be written (admittedly a fairly boring one) about the meetings, procedures and regulations that we had to overcome before finally being allowed to raise money for research into Thalassemia, an often fatal blood disorder simi-

lar to Sickle Cell Anaemia. Eventually persistence paid off and around £500 was raised in a very short time, much of it from a raffle at an open England training session. More photogenic was the blood doning. Repeated attacks of bureaucracy left us with just over an hour to round up volunteers. Nine intrepid England followers who were unluckly enough to be passing were persuaded to donate. The result; lots of badly needed publicity for the charity and a good story about England fans. I'm not aware that those happy-go-lucky Brazilian supporters (well, Europeans who've been given Brazilian shirts as part of their expensive World Cup tour package really) did anything like that.

There's so much more that I ought to tell you. How beautiful Bologna is. How we regretfully had to miss the 'Stop the World Cup' march because it clashed with the Belgian game. How we were too busy working to be touched by the hand of Cicciolina despite seeing the 'imaginative' posters for the Italian MP's World Cup film. How helpful the Bolognese Council were in agreeing to give us a portakabin office within four hours of our arrival. How we met with FIFA officials and COL, the Italian World Cup organisers who (except in Cagliari) were only too willing to help. And then there's the things that I ought not to tell you.... On top of all this we went to six football matches (we didn't bother with the third place play-off) some great, some captivating, some tense and some dreadful. We visited the beautiful Stadio Dall 'Ara in Bologna and the Stadia San Paolo in Naples, as characterless as its city's drivers are mad. We mixed with the Irish (as warm and friendly as their reputation) and with the young people of Belgium (very spotty). We inspected fan camps, provided interpreters in tense situations when the authorities were lost for words, we helped lay on transport for fans after matches and, taking our cue from the bigwigs in the Cagliari Stadio Sant 'Elia executive suites, declared FSA occupied premises alcohol ban-free zones.

Every football fan should try to go to the World Cup. For the staff of the FSA's Football Embassy it was an all-expenses paid trip, but believe me, they worked hard for it and helped raise our organistion's prestige and profile as never before.

We made plenty of friends and we made plenty of mistakes, but learned a lot. A mobile office and better communicaitons with our Liverpool base (our fault, not theirs) are a must for future tournaments. But whatever happens, Italia '90 was an unforgettable experience. It's just a shame that the West Germans took better penalties.

***Steve Beauchampé***

**F S A**

**The West Midlands branch of the Football Supporters Association meets on the second Monday of each month upstairs at the Queens Head in Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham city centre kick-off 8.00pm, admission free. However, this is only a temporary venue and it's best to check beforehand. To do this, or to find out anything else about the Association, phone Kathy Leay on 021 356 1808 or Steve Moss, 021 459 1482. Membership costs £5 (£3 for students and the unemployed) and you can join either at branch meetings or by sending a cheque or postal order made payable to the FSA to: The Football Supporters Association, PO Box 11, Liverpool L26 1XP.**

**F S A**

## *My Giro Is Not Very Much*

This current price structuring for season tickets is to be commended although the club failed to advertise concessions on offer to students or apparently decide on those available to the unemployed. I bought a season ticket.

The rise to £5 for ground admission (£7.50 lower tier seats) and £1 for the programme was regrettable but perhaps a sign of the times. I paid £5 against Bournemouth.

However, a £4 entrance fee for pre-season friendlies at St Andrews was too dear for me. I stayed away.

Although other clubs are similarly guilty of overcharging at friendlies (Coventry asked £5 against Halesowen) it would be nice to think Blues could show some initiative in their admission prices (for example at non-competitive games free entry for season ticket holders and half price for others). Test cricket often reduces its prices when low crowds are anticipated - it happened at both Edgbaston and the Oval this summer - usually resulting in healthy attendances.

Blues should continue to charge a standard price for League matches but with radical reductions for friendlies and preliminary round Leyland-DAF Cup games. Not only would it create considerable goodwill, but more people would come potentially increasing gate receipts, sales of food and other commercial activities, as well as raising vocal support.

It's not surprising that only 3,000 watched the Hereford game last season. I'm no marketing expert but I hope commonsense will result in a better pricing structure for such matches in the future.

Hugh O'Sullivan

# A Cautionary Tale

I suppose I wasn't the only one who, having spent the whole of June in front of the television watching Italia '90, subsequently made a conscious effort to avoid the box. However, I had to make an exception with the Channel Four repeat screening of Mike Leigh's mid-seventies classic Nuts in May. If you haven't seen it, Nuts is the tale of two early 'greens' whose idyllic camping holiday is ruined by the arrival of a couple of Brummies, Finger and 'Onk. Not only do they have authentic accents, a rarity in TV drama, but Finger turns out to be a Blues supporter.

"They've got quite a good team this season" suggests Welsh rugby fan Ray on returning to the campsite after a drinking bout.

"Yeah, but they shouldn't have sold Latchford....." interjects the perceptive Finger.

Having forked out nearly thirty quid for a book and a video purporting to represent Blues' history it was ironic that one irrelevant line in a work of humourous fiction should do more to evoke the depressing side of supporting Birmingham City. For Latchford's departure stands out as one of the saddest affairs in a club history littered with disappointment.

At the beginning of 1973-74 season Blues apparently stood on the threshold of the kind of success that had eluded them for a century. The previous campaign had ended with unbelievable scenes of celebration on the St Andrews pitch after the final home game with Leeds. Blues had finished tenth in their first season in Division One following promotion in 1971-72. Having been in relegation trouble at Christmas, the team put together a great run in the second half of the season scoring more points than champions Liverpool. The basis of the success was the form of the forwards, in particular Trevor Francis, still only 18, and top scorer Bob Latchford (22). Minutes after the Leeds match jubilant manager Freddie Goodwin made the first of two quotes that were to haunt him less than 12 months later.

"Birmingham City can become the Leeds of the seventies. But we want to win more than Leeds, and we can, because we are bolder. We have great players like Bob Latchford and Trevor Francis in positions which are the most difficult in the world to fill... That's why you can discount stories of me selling any of our top players, even though I know many clubs would pay a ransom for them."

The manager was right about his two brilliant young strikers, and with other fine prospects such as Burns and Gallagher waiting in the wings the mood at St Andrews had rightly changed from optimism to expectancy. Yet it was evident that Goodwin needed to purchase a couple of quality players. The forwards had worked a minor miracle at the end of 1972-73, but no team could achieve lasting success with star players in just one department. And since we were now in the top six as far as attendances were concerned, the supporters expected some action in the transfer market.

Yet when the following season started there were no new faces in the Blues line-up. So much for Goodwin's claims of boldness! As a result 1973-74 turned out to be the most bizarre of seasons for Birmingham City.

On October 4th Goodwin signed Leeds goalkeeper Gary Sprake for £90,000 - a British record for a 'keeper. A fortnight earlier he had bought Huddersfield full-back Dennis Clarke for £40,000 clearly panicking over Blues early season injury crisis. Sprake went on to make just 17 appearances for Blues, Clarke 14 - well and truly confirming doubts over the manager's judgement. When Sprake was carried off to cheers during his home debut against Wolves on October 13th, Bob Latchford took over in goal. Ken Burns moved to centre-forward, scoring the winning goal with a brilliant header. This set Goodwin thinking.

Then on November 23rd came Goodwin's finest quote and his second assurance to the fans following tabloid speculation: "Sell Latchford? I'd rather get the sack." (Blues' centre-forward had just scored hat-tricks in successive matches.)

January 1st 1974 saw Blues at last climb out of the bottom three, with Latchford the leading scorer in Division One. Then on February 13th Latchford joined Everton, Blues

# Sell Latchford? I'd rather get the sack—Goodwin

BLUES manager Freddie Goodwin said today that he would rather "get the sack" than sell Bob Latchford.

He added: "If we go down to the Second Division again, Bob Latchford goes with us. But I don't think we will go down."

receiving Howard Kendall, Archie Styles (!) and cash to take Latchford's valuation to £350,000 - a British record. Kenny Burns became centre-forward. Blues won their final game of the season, at home to Norwich, to avoid relegation, and the team did another lap of honour as the crowd chanted for Goodwin and Chairman Clifford Coombs.

The sale of Latchford was arguably the biggest kick in the teeth that Birmingham City had ever dealt to its beleagured supporters. In spite of it, the fans backed the team magnificently in those final matches of the season, which was more than the club deserved. And, needless to say, those fans were rewarded in the usual way - a few seasons of mediocrity, followed by the inevitable relegation.

But not all Blues supporters witnessed the great escape at the end of 1973-74, for Blues shed one or two when Big Bob left. The simultaneous discovery of two brilliant young strikers had seemed to them to herald a great future, and support had burgeoned. But now, despite Goodwin's assurances to the contrary, that promised land was beginning to appear illusory. Latchford, surely part of Blues grand design, had been sold just to obtain a player of similar ability, but five years older.

That loping, rather erratic teenager introduced by Stan Cullis in 1969 had blossomed into a powerful centre-forward who made the most of his strength having developed a deftness of touch with foot and head. Such qualities brought him a string of memorable goals, and cast him in the mould of the traditional football hero. Latchford was the local boy made good, which gave him one advantage over Trevor Francis in the fans' eyes. And while Francis was always prepared to make the most of physical challenges (understandable given the treatment he received), Latchford's usual response would be nothing more than a disarming grin. It all combined to win him great respect from the fans, and for many - particularly older supporters - he was the hero even more than Francis. It was tragic that less than a year later Kings Heath's favourite son was playing for Everton where he was First Division top scorer for four consecutive seasons.

Having 'struck oil' in the early seventies with the discovery of two brilliant young strikers, the club hadn't got the faintest idea how to harness it. Goodwin must take much of the blame, although he attempted to justify the sale of Latchford on the grounds that it was the only way he could gain the signature of a class player like Kendall. If that was the case then perhaps Coombs and the Board were implicated. Whatever the cause, Birmingham should have been lining up in 1974-75 with Burns and Gallagher as centre-backs, Francis and Latchford as strikers, the basis of a great team.

Blues should never have sold Bob Latchford. Thanks to Mike Leigh (and not Tom Ross) that sentiment has been committed to celluloid.

**PAUL BAKER**

# COMMERCIALLY SPEAKING

Although one has ruefully come to expect Birmingham City fans to be ill-treated by their club, Peter Brannan's dismissal as Commercial Manager takes things a step further. For some time Blues seemed to have had their eye on Brannan's Aston Villa counterpart, Abdul Rashid. Though it was never likely that he'd come to St Andrews, the speculation, added to Brannan only being on a weekly contract, signalled that Blues never saw Peter's appointment as long-term. However, irrespective of his qualities and ability to do the job, no one deserves the shabby treatment that Brannan received, learning of his departure through the media. It appears that he didn't fit the cosy image of a professional marketing database company which Bassett seems intent on creating. From Brannan's comments on Radio WM one can easily see how his opposition to the club's ID card scheme contributed to his dismissal. Brannan alleges that Jim Caffery's resignation as programme editor was in protest at the decision. Meanwhile it comes to something when boxholders and Gold Club members petition the club over its actions and shareholders threaten to call an EGM - so much for erasing Blues' tarnished image. Indeed, the Brannan dismissal is a classic example of the poor public relations emanating from St Andrews.

Joan Hill may be good at her job, but being a non-Brummie, does she have the same affection for the club as Peter Brannan, or his local knowledge and business contacts? Brannan claims that being a Blues fan worked against him, but surely this was an advantage? His help with Tired and Weary's football team reflected his feeling for the club and its followers and he'd clearly established a fine rapport with the box-holders - no disrespect to Frank Wilson, but they never petitioned when he left. When Peter Brannan stated that he was heartbroken at not having his contract renewed, it's safe to say that he was not alone in feeling let down by recent decisions taken by Birmingham City.

**Hugh O'Sullivan**

# TIRED AND WEARY AND ID CARDS - THE FACTS

The defamatory remarks made about Tired and Weary in the club programme v Exeter City and Samesh Kumar's subsequent comments on BRMB on the 5th October must not be allowed to go unchallenged. Members of this magazine were accused of trying to sabotage the club's ID card scheme by holding up the flow of spectators into the ground. This assertion was unsubstantiated and untrue. Tired and Weary has five co-editors. On the day in question - September 1st 1990 - one entered the ground very early, three were nowhere near St Andrews, but were socialising with Leyton Orient fans some miles away, while the other was assisting the FSA monitor the rate at which spectators were passing through the turnstiles.

Around 2.10p.m. the FSA members were standing about 10 yards from the Cattell Road turnstiles. The number of fans entering via these was a mere trickle. As the crowds increased, the FSA members moved back and spread out to cover other entrances.

On BRMB, the Chairman claimed that the police had complained that one of our co-editors was interviewing fans about the scheme and that this was slowing down the flow. This is absurd. Fans - no more than six or seven at a time - were being interviewed AROUND 20 YARDS FROM THE CATTELL ROAD TURNSTILES by a combination of reporters from the Birmingham Post and Mail, FSA representatives and our co-editor. If the line between Birmingham City's ID card system being safe or unsafe is so thin that such actions could have rendered it dangerous then it most certainly should be abolished.It beggars belief to think that this was a serious accusation by either the Chairman or the police - if it was then they truly are grasping at straws.

Just after 3.10 p.m., our co-editor asked a turnstile operator to try a card twice in the same reader. Both times the card was accepted. Only one other person was waiting to enter via that turnstile and he

enthusiastically supported this action. This time was chosen precisely so as not to cause any delay or inconvenience to other supporters.

Samesh Kumar has said that it was irresponsible to publicise the system's failings and that instead we should have spoken to the club privately. We already had. In July Tired and Weary met with Anne Bassett and highlighted the scheme's shortcomings. She ignored these criticisms - THAT was irresponsible. The FSA wrote to the City Council's Public Safety at Sports Stadia Committee upon which both Bassett and the police sit, pointing out the systems's failings. The Committee failed to address how these loopholes would be plugged.

It is an insult to the intelligence for Samesh to say that highlighting the scheme's deficiencies encourages people to try and abuse it. The ID card system is as riddled with holes as a colander and anyone who wanted to undermine it could find plenty of ways to do so - they certainly don't need us to tell them how! And, as the club have been happy to use the media to tell people how great their scheme is, then we have every right to use that same media to challenge them.

Finally, in the Exeter programme, Blues claimed that safety is a matter for the police and that we should leave it to "qualified professionals". Qualified professionals declared both Bradford and Hillsborough safe - and 157 people died. Safety is a matter for EVERYONE - how dare Birmingham City declare otherwise?

Instead of trying to reduce the ID card debate to Tired and Weary v the club, Samesh Kumar and Anne Bassett should concentrate on answering the very valid criticisms that many, many football fans have made about their scheme. Turnstile flow is falling well below that recommended by Lord Justice Taylor. Until Birmingham City can repeatedly meet safety recommendations they they will continue to receive torrents of justifiable criticism.

# VIDEO VIEW 1989/90

***Birmingham City Official Match Video - Goals and Highlights of the 1989/90 Season***

***VHS Roy Nichol Video Productions Ltd***

76 goals and 90 minutes of action isn't a bad deal for £12.99 even though Blues weren't the Third Division's most exciting team last season. This is the first time that the club have marketed such a video and they must be applauded for that. It seems much better value than buying selected match videos throughout the season.

But there's a problem. You remember those family video sketches on Alas Smith and Jones? Lousy picture quality, basic editing errors, fluffed lines.... well yes, it's all here. Presenter Roy Nichol spends long periods of his narration looking down at his notes rather than at the camera (trying it seems to save money by doing the whole season in one take). The match commentators would appear more at home at a Rugby League clash. Goals and games are referred to chronologically but some are simply missed out altogether (watching the tape you wouldn't know Chester were in our Division). The editing is so slipshod that after a piece of action Nichol often comes on in mid-sentence and sometimes it's a while before you can work out what he's on about. The most elementary error however concerns the Oldham cup replay. After film of the first game and an interview with Nigel Gleghorn about the prospects for the replay we cut to.... the Bristol City home match, with no reference made whatsoever to the cup game! This is almost unbelievable. The producers not only suffer from amnesia - they can't count either. At one stage we're told Blues are ninth in Division Three as the table on screen shows them placed tenth. Perhaps most ridiculously of all, towards the end of the tape Nichol promises us "the three best goals of the season - two by Paul Tait, one by Bailey." What follows are FOUR goals - TWO by Paul Tait, ONE by Dennis Bailey and ONE by Nigel Gleghorn! To Roy Nichol and his company making this tape must have been a chore - a contractual obligation to be fulfilled and ticked off the list of jobs to be done; "Right that's Birmingham City finished, who's next - Bolton?" The result is shoddy, amateurish and third rate.

Having said all that the video is a reasonably comprehensive compilation of the season's action. It contains nearly every goal scored at St Andrews and a more limited selection of away goals and action; namely Blackpool, Colchester, Huddersfield, Preston (no penalty) and Nigel Gleghorn's spectacular ef-

fort at Northampton. As a special bonus, for those who didn't make it through the fog (or for those that did and fell asleep) you can witness five minutes of tedious football at Wigan. How they found five minutes of action I'll never know. There's also the inept performance at Tranmere which Nichol describes as "entertaining". From where I was standing the only entertaining part was Overson's 40 yard effort which cleared the cattle shed!

For those that were unable (or couldn't be bothered) to attend every match this video is an excellent chance to see what you missed. It's a shame there aren't more away goals on tape but that's often due to the lack of facilities at some Third Division clubs. Some of the highlights chosen also leave a lot to be desired but we all have our special memories of last season and hopefully this video captures at least some of them.

At the end of this season let's hope that a more professional company can produce the tape. As it stands, what we've got here is the footballing equivalent of Plan 9 From Outer Space.

**Matt Cole**

# VIDEO VIEW HISTORY

***The Official History of the Blues - Narrated by Tom Ross***
***65 minutes Meridian Films Ltd - VHS £12.99***

This video gets off to a nauseating start - the introductory music would be more at home on children's television than a football video. Tom Ross narrates and for the most part does a decent job - at least he's a Blues fan.

The club's formative years are rather glossed over with scant regard paid to early greats such as Joe Bradford and Harry Hibbs. Clearly television coverage is out of the question but just like the Tony Matthews book the extent of research seems questionable. The first major action is the 1931 FA Cup run which ended with defeat by West Brom at Wembley.

For me the star of the video is undoubtedly Eddie Brown talking about the '54-'55 season when Blues scored 92 goals and became Second Division Champions. He reminisces about the fortnight in which Blues thrashed Port Vale 7-2 and the now mighty Liverpool 9-1. He also criticizes Harry Parkes for the collared shirts they had to wear in the 1956 Cup Final, shirts which look rather similar to this season's. Eddie also attempts to sing "Keep Right On", after several gins it appears.

There's brief action of Blues' moment of glory, the 1963 League Cup final against Aston Villa. Unfortunately we have to make do with the second leg, a 0-0 draw at Villa Park and the lifting of the trophy by Trevor Smith following our 3-1 aggregate victory. I wonder whether anyone has film of the first leg? I'm sure most current Blues fans haven't seen it.

The video's goal action predominantly covers three players; a trio regarded as the best combination in the country in the early seventies, namely Latchford, Francis and Hatton. 14 of their goals bring back memories of the good old days of First Division status. However all the goals are ITV-Central based. Whether this is the Tom Ross connection or just laziness in not contacting the BBC I don't know. But the video could have been much improved with the Beeb's help. For instance the 1984 FA Cup Quarter-Final against Watford (OK we lost) wasn't even mentioned. This was one of the major highlights (if not THE major highlight) of the last 10 years.

The tape then briskly moves on to interview Garry Pendrey talking about the 1971-72 Orient promotion - clinching clash when just about everything that could happen did. Pendrey and Malcolm Page (or was it Tom Jones?) relive the nightmare of the 1975 FA Cup Semi-Final against Fulham. The Joe Gallagher goal in the first match is shown but fortunately Fulham's winner at Maine Road seems to have been misplaced.

There's action from the 1976-77 season when Blues recorded the double over Villa (Burns, Connolly and Francis [2]) the scorers, along with a plethora of goals from the 1979-80 season from the likes of Bertschin, Curbishley and Dillon, who all netted in the dramatic 3-3 draw against Notts County which clinched promotion. There's also an interview with the Kop hero of the time , Frank Worthington.

There are more goals from Neil Whatmore and two Mick Harford efforts which helped keep Blues in Division One in

consecutive seasons in the mid-eighties,along with what Tom Ross describes as a superb (?) hat-trick by David Geddis at Portsmouth.

The video then takes a turn for the worse with a long series of interviews with our Ken (on how he saved the club - for a change!) Samesh, Dave Mackay and Fred Davies. While it's a better produced tape than the goals compilation, it's unfortunate that it concentrates so much on the last 20 years. With more research I'm convinced it could have been transformed from a good précis to an excellent story of the Blues. It's probably better value than the book - let's hope that an improved version can be produced soon with the recommended adjustments in place.

MATT COLE

## WIN UP TO HALF A MILLION POUNDS IN THE GREAT TIRED AND WEARY I.D. CARD CHASE

Are you a City record breaker? We're looking for the Blues fan with the most ID cards - and you'll have to go some to beat the current leaders in this, the GREAT TIRED AND WEARY ID CARD CHASE.

We all know someone who's got 2 or even 3 ID cards, but we've learned of folks who can knock such totals into a cocked hat!

For example there's AMBER O'SULLIVAN, a 5 year old tabby from Erdington. Amber (who's written for Tired and Weary) has 9 cards - that's one for each of your lives eh, Amber!

P.D. PHILE from Rochdale received 11 (ELEVEN!) cards after a letter that he sent to Amsterdam requesting some videos was misdirected to St Andrews. But he's a kindly chap and tells us that he'll happily escort a party of schoolboys with him to home games. Any takers out there in the Family Stand?

Meanwhile, tied on 16 cards each (count 'em) are MR MICHAEL MOUSE of Teenage Mutant Hero Ninja Turtle Gardens, Disneyland and ARCHDUKE FERDINAND OF AUSTRO-HUNGARY - shurely shome mistake there Blues - the Archduke doesn't like football!

But top of the tree, and the one that you've all got to beat, is the late MRS EDITH de SEALSLAYER of Agincourt, who was recently sent a staggering 1,137 ID cards. "That even beats the number of poll tax bills she's received" laughs her ex-brother, Jose Vasqueth de Sealslayer. The club even offered to present Edith with her 1000th card at half-time during the Huddersfield Town match. Needless to say, Edith had to decline. So that's your target - 1,138. And to help you on your way, we've hidden 500 cards throughout Birmingham - they could be anywhere; behind hedges, stuck to lamposts, underneath office blocks, inside tins of baby food, in sex shops - there's just no telling. So happy hunting - and if you reach that magic figure of 1,138 cards then you could win a super prize, for Tired and Weary will match, pound for pound, the amount of the Kevin Ashley sale money that Dave Mackay is given to spend.

## ONE IN TWO AND A HALF THOUSAND

Wembley, the FA Cup Final - 80,000 expectant fans. Brian Goodhall, a lifelong Palace fan, and Mary Hill, 20 years following Manchester United, must watch from home. Yet this isn't just another incident in Wembley's appalling history of ticket allocation. Unlucky ticketless fans they were not. They had a less than ONE IN TWO AND A HALF THOUSAND chance of attending. Why? Because our national stadium, for the biggest fixture in the English season, accommodated only 30 wheelchairs. A more compelling case for a new national arena with proper facilities for ALL is hard to imagine.

Hence, just as the 'Wembley - where else?' slogan leaves fans screaming "anywhere", so the 'Rebirth of the Blues' catchphrase must incorporate everyone. Families, the business community and the masses of ordinary supporters are supposedly being taken more seriously. Whether it be at St Andrews or elsewhere, it's important that the disabled - significant within all these groups - receive similar attention.

Leaving aside the issue of new stadiums, our potential disabled following is beyond the Remploy Stand's current capacity. An important cup-tie against well supported opposition would even now stretch it to the limits. Being

at pitch level is bad enough, but the rake of its floor is too shallow, making the view as restricted as that from the bottom rows of the Paddock. And the lack of seating for able-bodied companions only highlights its makeshift design.

The Remploy's not irredeemable however - it has a roof after all and a toilet that's not beyond repair. Undoubtedly a more substantial, custom-built structure is needed. An enclosure (perhaps by the scoreboard) would provide another viewing angle and the option to be closer to the main body of support. This is important - Norwich's executive-style disabled enclosure has been described as sterile, isolated and less preferable to sitting outdoors. Proper facilities for the disabled may be considered too extravagant or expensive for the likes of Birmingham City. Yet putting these modest proposals into perspective, Dortmund have lifts leading to specially sited viewing platforms, Udine's disabled fans are located in the heart of their main stand and there are 554 disabled places around Strasbourg's ground. Even some of our smaller clubs such as Torquay, Wrexham, York, Scunthorpe and Grimsby provide commentaries for the blind. Blues should at least be capable of keeping up with these clubs. Sure, money's tight but if cinemas, theatres, restaurants etc. can do it then so can Birmingham City. Given the recent St Andrews renovations and the various grants and sponsorship opportunities available, whether we do seems largely dependent on our priorities and our willingness.

Apart from match day facilities, the Kumars have inherited many other problems facing disabled visitors to St Andrews, some of which won't be easy to overcome. Take the main office and the newly refurbished Executive Club (where the AGM is usually held). Both are inaccessible to anyone unable to climb stairs. With the supporters club and family rooms also lacking ramps, disabled toilets etc., this is all extremely disconcerting given Blues' aims and potential achievements.

Therefore access improvements should at least be on the agenda. Meanwhile, there are plenty of other measures that could be implemented - involving disabled youngsters in the Junior Blues for example. Grimsby Town Handicapped Supporters Club run a 40 person capacity coach to ALL their fixtures. It's sponsored by local business and is an idea that Blues should seriously investigate. Elsewhere, instead of reading in the programme how marvellous the Soccer Shop is, a ramp and widened door would allow disabled souvenir hunters to judge for themselves.

There really is no excuse for any new projects excluding a section of support. Anne Bassett's ideas to take the club to local disabled groups are great, but in isolation could appear patronising - like treating people just after the same opportunities to support Blues as charity cases. It was pleasing to see the welcome given the lad with special needs on the cover of the Middlesborough programme. The challenge now is for Blues to get on with making such examples the norm for a progressive, caring club, rather than having them as front page material. Our disabled fans mustn't feel little more than a good public relations opportunity. If they do, then the time to dispel this was yesterday. **Jim Bryant**

## BLUES KIT

Samesh said the new Blues top would be suitable for evening wear; a real fashion item. So why have we got a design that looks like it's got white stains down its front and back? The less charitable might argue 'blotching' is all that Matchwinner are good for, having a flair for fashion as bad as the current collar. True, some of our traditional royal blue identity appears to have been bleached away for the sake of a somewhat messy looking shirt. On the plus side it is distinctive and different without being outrageously so and the sponsors' logo is less obtrusive. The overall verdict? Slightly disappointing but given Matchwinners' track record it could have been a lot worse. At least it arrived on time.

## Samesh Speaks

Hands up those of you who attended one of Samesh's 'Meet the Chairman" evenings. Hmn, not many of you eh? Well that's a real shame because this was an excellent initiative by the club giving supporters a (probably unique) opportunity to talk at length and leisure with the guy at the helm of our club. Yet less than 100 people took up the offer. Hopefully more such gatherings will take place if the demand is there. There's no point saying the club doesn't listen to its supporters if you don't take the chance to let them hear your views. Contact Ivor Crigman c/o St Andrews to see if there's the likelihood of any further dates.

# MUSEUM PIECE

*You've read the book, you've seen the film, now visit the museum. Well O.K. maybe that doesn't sound too enticing, but hold on, we're talking about the complete history of Birmingham City here, or at least as much of it as we can get our hands on.*

*It was last April, at the first of Samesh's fireside chats with the fans, that the Chairman remarked how some members of staff didn't even know that Blues had once won the League Cup. I later learnt that trophies and other memorabilia vital to our history had been relegated to cupboards at St Andrews, unwanted, unrespected and unimportant. Now no one would kid themselves that Blues could fill much more than a plastic bag with their silverware, but like every other football club, Birmingham City are rich in history with characters, traditions and momentoes that are important to us, and which in their own way, give us a pride in Blues. After all, there's more to a football club than the awards that it's won.*

*Consequently, we put it to Samesh that space - maybe initially just a room or two - be set aside to create a museum to house, and to reflect, the things that have made Birmingham City. The response was positive, the Chairman suggesting that supporters would be the best, the most faithful, at piecing together such a collection.*

*So, let's fast forward twelve months or so, and, after entering the museum through one of those now unwanted Emmeline Street turnstiles, what might we expect to find?*

*Trophies? Well, there are one or two - the 1945-46 Wartime Football League South Championship trophy used to be displayed at the club and the La Linea trophy, so big it makes the European Cup look like a bracelet's lucky charm, is worth seeing for anyone who missed the players' valiant attempts to carry this Spanish trinket around the pitch back in 1978. Somewhere in those cupboards there must be souvenirs of our two Wembley appearances and League Cup victory as well as items to stir memories of the club's pioneering days in the Inter-Cities Fairs Cup.*

*Other candidates for the exhibition include the matchball with which we scored nine goals against Liverpool in 1954, old team pictures and individual player photos. Perhaps a bust of a famous Blues personality, such as Harry Morris, the man whose vision brought the club to St Andrews, could be commissioned. Hopefully an entire collection of Birmingham City programmes could be stored, in sumptuous royal blue binders - one for each season - for fans to inspect. Similarly, indexed newspaper cuttings of match reports and important stories could be amassed (a true test of whether the Evening Mail was always so Villa biased and a chance to find out who preceded Leon Hickman - and please can we have them back, dead or alive!)*

*Old and unusual kits should be displayed, and if ex-players could be persuaded of the worth and honesty behind the project, some might donate from their own collections - international caps or medals for instance. The museum must also give fans an insight into how a football club is run - old contracts, a wage slip, a copy of the training ground contract,transfer forms etc. - all would help dispel the mystery of what goes on behind the scenes.*

*The fire which destroyed so many of the club's records in 1942 didn't kill memories. The recollections of people involved with Blues - officials, players and fans - should be recorded before it is too late and made available for ex-*

*amination. Unlike the book and the video, the museum shouldn't try to gloss over the bad times. Its aim mustn't be to make us worship our club, rather we should be educated by its history, inspired to make its future brighter. The exhibition must tell the clubs' social history, explaining where and why we had previous grounds; what type of people came to watch us; the changing patterns, attitudes and expectations of supporters; what amenities were available for spectators in the past; how fans responded to the club's fortunes, why, how and by whose hand the Supporters Club came into being.*

*The role that fans play in creating atmosphere must be explained, perhaps through a montage of scarves, hats, banners and flags; objects crucial to the colour and spectacle of football, but whose origins in the game are little known. Likewise, the ephemera that supporters collect - cigarette cards, badges and assorted oddities, all tell part of the story of the Blues. So do paintings and drawings; cricket has an abundance of artists, football less so. Discounting those Beau Brummie Club members' attempts at Trevor Francis and Willie Bell in the mid-seventies, has an accomplised artist ever turned their attentions to Birmingham City? And if not then the club should encourage it.*

*Funding for such a venture could come from the Arts Council, Heartlands Development Corporation or via an inner city regeneration grant. For the city this unique initiative would be a small, but important tourist attraction, perhaps the first step towards the creation of a museum of English football, to be sited at the proposed national stadium close to the NEC. Certainly visiting supporters, sponsors and club guests should find that the St Andrews exhibition enhances their visit to the ground. The museum should also prove an attraction for school parties and other groups whose visit could be given added interest by hearing the reminiscences of a former player with an afternoon off from running his pub or burying people.*

*While it would be nice to offer everyone free admission, realistically non season ticket holders might have to pay. However, run with love and care by supporters, overheads should be kept down. Visitors could also be encouraged to the Birmingham City Soccer Shop and a range of high quality souvenirs relating to the club's history could be developed, raising income and further publicising the project.*

*If the scheme does go ahead then Blues must appreciate that the fans who bring it to fruition, unlike Tony Matthews and the company behind the (in) Complete History of Birmingham City video, are involved primarily because they believe in it. They are NOT candidates for exploitation. The club should meet their full expenses as well as giving them free season tickets, programme subscriptions and a few complimentary coach trips to away games.*

*That's not much to ask in return for the official recorded version of Birmingham City's heritage.*

## Steve Beauchampé

***If anyone is interested in helping to turn this idea into reality please contact Paul Baker on 021 354 9205.***

## COVER STORY

What was it on the front and back cover of Tired and Weary Issue 9? Was it a bird? Was it a plane? No, it was a cock-up. What you were supposed to see on the front was a negative of Bolton's goalie turning a shot round the post during our encounter at Burnden Park in February and a ghostly view of Nigel Gleghorn's stunning equaliser at Northampton on the back - neither photo to have a border. Alas it didn't quite work out that way. Still, if you spent as much time wondering what it was as we did arguing who was to blame then you must have had a pretty boring last few months.

## CREWE

On the day of the Crewe away match, a female Blues representative wrongly told fans that the game was NOT all-ticket; Birmingham City supporters "could pay on the turnstiles." Of course this was untrue. Thankfully, given Gresty Road's capacity and its all-ticket history, most fans had bought tickets beforehand (though there had been nothing in our two previous home programmes or in the local press advising supporters of the situation). However, about 30 fans fell victim to the crass administration and were locked out. Over a fortnight later Blues have made no public apology.

. The only positive thing to come out of the whole affair was the superb behaviour of those loyal supporters who were let down on a cold night 70 miles from home.

## VILLA, VILLA,

**OUT NOW TAW VIDEO INC. PRESENTS VILLA, VILLA, WHAT'S THE SCORE?**

We've bought the 1989-90 complete goals of the season compilation videos of every First Division club except Aston Villa. And now, thanks to judicious editing, it's with great pride - nay smugness - that we offer you 'VILLA,VILLA,WHAT'S THE SCORE?' Featuring every goal the Villa conceded last season 'VILLA,VILLA,WHAT'S THE SCORE?' retails at a bargain £646.81p plus p&p (well, we had to buy 19 tapes and a second VCR didn't we?) Available on Philips V2000 format only. SPECIAL BONUS !!!!!! Send for your tape within 14 days and as a special bonus we'll rush you 'INTER THE NET' a triple treat goal feast sent over the line to us from Milan!

## DRIPPY YOUTHS

Reaction to last season's Reading pitch invasions must have shocked the perpetrators. The Kop's reverberating chants of "You're just a bunch of wankers" and the applause that greeted the police's intervention was an apt response to such immature behaviour. Apart from attacking the club's name, the idiots could have robbed us of promotion and were in no small way responsible for the introduction of ID.

But are the right things being done to cleanse us of our 'effluent tendency'? While the unusually sensitive policing on that day was justified, the threat seemed underestimated and the response to the invasions slow and confused. Even more perplexing is that, despite numerous vivid newspaper photographs and police film, just about everyone got away with it. Thus, decent people often feel under the cosh from the notorious West Midlands Force, yet when t he real thugs turn up and incidents occur, the police hardly bat an eyelid. Consequently fans can be forgiven for thinking that a huge police presence and wage bill is being inflicted upon them, instead of policing levels and methods capable of responding to problems.

Undoubtedly many match-goers are wary and distrustful of the coppers at St Andrews. Such caution isn't really surprising when the police haven't ever seriously tried to establish a dialogue, let alone listen to or work alongside fans. A classic case of a wasted opportunity to open a channel of communication is the Police Report in the programme. Instead of Superintendent David Greene's insulting 'you're generally behaving yourselves so far but don't step out of line or we'll have you' tone, he should be writing about safety, where to go for assistance and how to complain if we're not happy with the conduct of him or his officers. Our police should study the methods their Dutch counterparts employed in Italy, where their role included acting as advisors to supporters. The result was general co-operation between both sides with very little of the antagonism so prevalent in this country. Such tactics almost certainly lead to fans becoming more willing to help the police.

Deterring troublemakers is made even harder by the isolation that many genuine supporters still feel towards Blues. We aren't even consulted over issues affecting our safety such as fences and ID cards despite, for example, several requests from this magazine for fan representation on the relevant

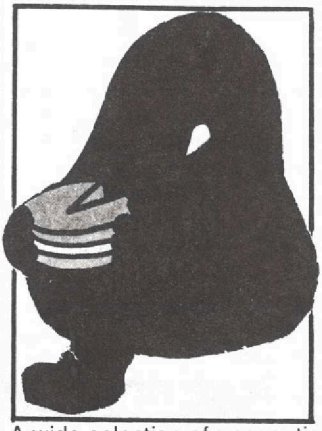
Council Committee Developing community relations and combatting hooliganism are inextricably linked and, to be fair, certain initiatives of the current regime show very positive efforts being made in this area. Yet the main core of support, and the chief source of potential problems - youths and young men - seem to be low priority. And when they do receive prominence it's usually through the Board calling them 'undesirable', 'not wanted' or, as with a recent letter sent to Main Stand season ticket holders, apologising for their presence to other fans. This, and the all-punishing identity card scheme, is making a lot of innocent people feel unwelcome without seriously addressing the violence problem still bubbling away below the surface. The Railway End Paddock just happens to be the most visible and voluble evidence that St Andrews continues to have an intimidating feel which many visitors have commented on. Indeed, to judge by the pre-season friendly at Kidderminster, even attacking and robbing Blues players of their strips is now acceptable and part of being a 'hard man'. What's next; team bus hijackings? Adolescents lurking in the bushes at training sessions?

It is the 15-30 age group who most influence the atmosphere at Blues games. Yet little is done to positively encourage their excellent support. The kids have football teams, families their own stand and the over 50s a club. But teenagers and young adults have nothing and are finding it increasingly harder to even get into the ground these days. The club say they needed ID to attract business but surely sponsors would see the benefit of involving Blues' youth following. Backing football teams, film and video nights, giving cash to the Supporters Club etc. may well appeal to wealthier fans. Apart from addressing football-related hooliganism in a constructive way rather than simply controlling or even ignoring it, such ideas would allow the club to actually be a CLUB for a lot more of its supporters. Blues are to be complemented on their decision to meet and talk with those arrested at ,or ejected from, St Andrews.Of course there will probably always be those unaffected, no matter what initiatives are taken and Blues policy of lengthy bans for them, while hard to enforce, is quite understandable. Continued tough legislation, coupled with the speedy implementation of Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations on pitch encroachment, could further help deter another Reading. The return of high fences is out of the question but the sight of drippy youths strutting about the playing surface, some arms aloft in victory, others digging up the turf, was a clear indication that current measures need reassessing: it was easy and they knew they'd get away with it.

Supporters are as sick of authorities' failure to seriously understand hooliganism as they are of those who commit it. As an example of the police's naivety, a recent West Midlands Police football planning meeting revealed that 14 out of the 15 officers present had never heard of the Football Supporters Association. So often those in power seem to be living in a different world to the rest of us. Until they wise up instead of merely speaking and acting tough the problems won't be cured. For years Blues fans have suffered the same old scenario of each new incident being greeted with stupified disbelief and angry pontifications. As things stand, you can almost pinpoint from the fixture list the matches at which there will be trouble.

**Jim Bryant**

# REFRESHMENTS AREN'T SERVED



A wide selection of unappetising fayre is once again on offer at the refreshment kiosks around the ground (we're hoping to have at least two open today). A range of cold meats (pasties, sausage rolls, rat etc.) are available - remember to wash them down with a long cool cup of tea, coffee or Bovril. And, perish the thought, if we should run out of drinks don't forget there's a constant stream of piping hot piss on tap - you'll find it flowing from the top of Spion Kop - it's yours free, compliments of the management. For nostalgia buffs we've an assortment of sandwiches from 'days gone by' - just like grandma used to make (in fact, with our food, she probably did).Some supporters have complained of slow service. Mindful of this, we are happy to announce the installation of a limited number of hammocks on the terracing to help make your wait more enjoyable; contact the Commercial Department for details of our advantageous rates. Meanwhile, we strongly advise those of you wanting food at the Crewe and Shrewsbury home games (April 27th and May 4th 1991) to start queuing immediately. Bon appetit.

Rod Holden Commercial Manager

# GROUNDS FOR CONCERN

January 4th 1991 could be D-Day for St Andrews. That is the date Superstadia are due to report on their feasibility study into the redevelopment of St Andrews and a possible move to a new stadium. Our instinctive reaction 'Hands off St Andrews' may need to be revised when all the facts and options become clear.

The short-term question mark over the ground concerns the Heartlands redevelopment of Bordesley as an urban village. Already major housing schemes have transformed the Kingston Road area. What could possibly be worrying for Blues about a project for 600 new homes and 2,000 new residents - a potential captive audience on the club's doorstep? The prospect of harking back to the old days when the stadium nestled within a lively local community who looked on the club as a social venue should be seized on by the authorities. Unfortunately the planning documents don't see it that way. Indeed Birmingham City is mentioned only as having "deterred housing development". Further, "to reduce nuisance caused by football crowds the Emmeline St Bridge will be closed and an alternative access provided from Coventry Road." This latter development will mean in May 1991 the resiting of the Emmeline corner turnstiles towards the centre of the Kop and so has major implications for supporters entry and exit from the ground. Typically the fire, police and ambulance authorities as well as the club have been consulted, but not the fans. Car parking facilities have already been lost to Heartlands and this project can only increase congestion on the Coventry Road side. If this were not enough, the Bordesley Development Framework envisages a series of road closures and, combined with residential car parking, supporters will find it increasingly difficult to park in the streets near the ground.

The sad thing about all this is the failure of both the club and, more particularly, the council to seriously promote St Andrews as a potential community resource. A renovated ground with leisure and community facilities should be at the heart of the East Birmingham redevelopment.

But it would be wrong to see the City Council as the villains of the piece, a lengthy discussion with a Development Department official made it clear that they would like a revived St Andrews too. However, lacking the public funds to bring this about, it is up to the club itself to generate the capital. The City Council had investigated the viability of a project along the lines of the Utrecht stadium with offices at each corner of the ground, but business reaction had been unfavourable.

The lack of a forceful personality at the club in the past had undoubtedly prevented the interests of Birmingham City being given the political priority they deserve. (As did the club's failure from 1986-88 to meet the conditions of the Council loan and become a focus for the local community). Protracted negotiations have been underway since the Kumars' arrival, but when one considers the refusal of the Council to allow Blues to open a Sunday market at the ground, it's not hard to see why Samesh Kumar has seemingly lost patience and decided to act unilaterally. He has appointed a consortium of developers, Superstadia, to investigate building a 35,000 all- seater stadium as part of a £30m leisure scheme. This project could be based at St Andrews, but even without the short-term

pressure from Heartlands on parking and land use, there are reasons why a move could be needed.

Most obvious is lack of space on the existing land owned by the club. The revenue raising aspects to the scheme - a retail tie-up, and the leisure amenities mentioned like a ski slope and bowling alley are unlikely to be crammed in alongside St Andrews and an adequate car park. Without these cash generators the many millions needed to bring St Andrews up to the all- seater standard required by FIFA (effectively after 1993 European cup ties must be played in all-seat grounds) could prove beyond even the long awaited £5m Elmdon windfall.

A 35,000 capacity stadium would mean the complete rebuilding of the two terrace stands as their rake is too shallow to merely stick seats on. Re-roofing would probably be necessary given the holes in the existing shelter. Figures for the Molineux redesign suggest that up to £10m would be needed. Realistically therefore to retain a decent capacity and secure private sector capital this project may involve uprooting.

This is given added weight by the long-term proposals for the area. The Bordesley development plans talk of "possible future developments adjoining Birmingham City" and despite council reassurances that "there's no hid-

den agenda", the "Extension" label hovers a little too closely over the ground for comfort. The speed with which the new houses already built were snapped up suggests St Andrews' 11 acres may be a prime target for ambitious property developers. A further constraint is the quality of the soil underneath the stands. As long ago as September 1989 a council employee contacted Tired and Weary to warn us that the ground beneath Spion Kop was subsiding. We have no other evidence on this, but the planning documents state that substantial land reclamation would be needed before major work could begin. Once you take all this on board, it's easy to see why the club's hand might be forced and a move hard to resist.

To complicate matters further, Peat Marwick Mclintock (funded by the FA and City Council) are investigating the building of a new 80,000 capacity National Stadium adjacent to the NEC. This project must be taken seriously for the FA contract with Wembley runs out in 2003 and they're fed up of lining the pockets of Jarvis Astaire. Ballast Nedam, responsible for many continental stadia, are the designers and the author Simon Inglis is a consultant to the project.

All this could be of relevance to Blues in that they're a potential tenant of the stadium. Inglis actually approached Tired and Weary with a view to tapping the feelings of Blues fans about such a move. However, any transfer would be well into the future and has problems. Rental cost is one, but more telling is the unhappy prospect of Blues playing in a 90% empty stadium every fortnight. At the moment therefore, while a National Stadium could well be on the cards and is to be welcomed (even if it's over 100 miles from Samesh Kumar's doorstep) Blues part in it is only a pipedream.

If we are to get a new stadium it is most likely to be with Superstadia and for the reasons outlined may well be away from St Andrews. Exactly where is unclear, but not necessarily Elmdon way according to Samesh. The idea of selling St Andrews, netting a few million and then leaving the bulk of the capital cost of a new stadium to developers has an appealing logic but is fraught with dangers.

Not the least is the need for planning permission, but by apparently antagonising the City Council this could be hard to wrestle from the politicians- it's worth remembering the club still owes the Council £150,000.

Another worry is the failure of any English club to build a decent post-war stadium. Supporters need look only to Bescot to see the aesthetic nightmare a new ground could become - identical, characterless stands designed without feeling, just to perform a function. St Andrews, for all its faults, has a distinct footballing aura which would be hard to reproduce elsewhere, particularly in a hasty scheme done on the cheap. Anything less than four cantilever stands with distinctive design on a scale and with a feel akin to Ibrox would be unacceptable. The most worrying aspect is that the football stadium seems merely an adjunct to the other leisure facilities. We have to beware of our football club becoming a mere annexe to a garish leisure theme park. This is even more the case should the club relinquish ownership of the ground and end up paying property developers an annual index-linked rent. The mistakes made by Walsall and the same threats to supporters' interests raised by Fulham's loss of ground ownership loom large. Fans at the many clubs now contemplating new grounds should beware of their clubs becoming mere pawns in the hands of the profit-makers.

One way of averting these dangers could be a mass share issue to fund a capital restructuring. Not only could the six-figure sum thereby raised go towards a decent supporters club adjoining any new stadium, the existence of a broad ownership base could, as the case of Hibernian demonstrates, be invaluable in fending off predatory financial manoeuvres.

Overall the plans are true to Samesh's character - visionary but vague, and have to be viewed sceptically. Grave reservations must be expressed at the prospect of mortgaging the club's future to the baggy-suited BMW brigade.

No Blues fan could contemplate leaving St Andrews without a heavy heart, but there are good reasons why we may reluctantly have to come to terms with it. In this close season substantial sums had to be spent merely to get a Safety Certificate and re-open. A stadium large enough to accommodate Blues potential following and provide decent covered viewing could prove

prohibitively costly and run out of space if we stay at St Andrews. It would only be possible if the club and Council got together to overcome the constraints on redevelopment by organising planning permission and the acquisition of vacant land and buildings to enable a money-making project to be situated in Bordesley Green. Samesh's unilateral move may have jeopardized this by antagonizing councillors. Yet given the political will and motivation, a renovated St Andrews should not be ruled out. Despite his outburst in the Mail, Councillor Bryan Bird has since written to us stating "I feel that any planning problems could be overcome SHOULD THE CLUB HAVE THE WILL TO REDEVELOP THE STADIUM."

Funding from the Football Trust and possibly the European Community could be utilised in a public/private sector collaboration that could be of genuine benefit to the whole city. Only if such ideas prove fruitless should a move away be contemplated.

In the short-term the best that can be hoped for are minor improvements to the vicinity of St Andrews. In the long-term unless Birmingham City Council and the club can devise a package incorporating community and commercial objectives, logic will prevail over sentiment with an out of town private sector development a serious possibility.

Such a move could only be justified if we get a FOOTBALL stadium that does justice to our heritage and potential, which is easy to get to, and which has benefited from the incorporation of supporters' ideas and desires at the design stage. The stadia we marvelled at during the World Cup have to be the models - they prove modern architecture can be innovative and that a new ground needn't look like an out of town DIY superstore. It would be ideal if all this could happen at our existing home, but if finance and politics leave only a choice between a patched up St Andrews or an impressive new ground, the prospect of at last escaping the gypsies curse may prove too enticing to resist.

**DAVID PARKER**

# TEAM NEWS

**Manager: Survived a stay in Kuwait but may not come through this season at Birmingham unscathed**
**Colours: shade of blue with white splodges**

1. Welshman with dodgy back
2. Left when the Wolves were at the door
3. Successful slaphead Sky Blue summer singing
4. Any offers for this £57,500 Scottish dead loss?
5. Old peoples home manager liv ing in Burnley
6. Not someone you would invite to your 18th Birthday Party
7. Long-term injured, ex-Shepshed Charterhouse
8. Appreciates a bit of the old Acid/ Underground/ Techno/Hip-House - not Trevor Francis
9. "I'll never play for Blues again"
10. Cheap Japanese import
11. Good for a bust-up with opposing player/Assistant Manager
12. Non-entity, but still on Blues' books (think of menswear)
14. Chairman who'd like a game